

# ESSENTIAL CIVIL WAR CURRICULUM

## Primary Resources for Civil War Military History

By Al McLean

### Resources

If you can read only one book

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.
Aimone, Alan C. and Barbara A. Aimone	<i>A Users Guide to the Official Records of the Civil War</i> . Shippensburg, PA: White Mane Publishing Company, Inc., 1993.

### Books and Articles

Author	<i>Title</i> . City: Publisher, Year.   “Title,” in <i>Journal</i> ##, no. # (Date): #.
Eales, Anne Bruner	<i>Guide to Genealogical Research in the National Archives</i> (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Record Service, 2000-2012).
United States Navy Department	<i>Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies in the War of the Rebellion</i> , 30 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1894-1922).
United States War Department	<i>The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies</i> , 70 vols. in 128 parts (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901).
_____.	<i>Atlas to Accompany the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies</i> , 2 vols. (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1891-1895).

## Organizations

### Web Resources

URL	Name and description
<a href="http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/waro.html">http://ebooks.library.cornell.edu/m/moawar/waro.html</a>	Cornell University Making of America series includes full text of the <i>Official Records</i> and other primary documents available on-line.
<a href="http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/">http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/</a>	<i>Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, 1789 – 1924</i> , is a free website of the Library of Congress available on-line.
<a href="http://virginiachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=p&amp;p=home&amp;e=-----en-20-1--txt-txIN-----">http://virginiachronicle.com/cgi-bin/virginia?a=p&amp;p=home&amp;e=-----en-20-1--txt-txIN-----</a>	<i>Virginia Chronicle</i> , is a searchable database of Virginia and West Virginia newspapers, a free website of the Library of Virginia.
<a href="http://www.genealogybank.com/static/home/">http://www.genealogybank.com/static/home/</a>	<i>Genealogy Bank</i> , is a fee-based website with a searchable database of over 7,000 newspapers from 1690 – the present day.
<a href="https://www.newspapers.com/">https://www.newspapers.com/</a>	<i>Newspapers.com</i> , is a fee-based website with a searchable database of over 4,500 newspapers from 1700s – 2000s.
<a href="http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/">http://www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc/</a>	NUCMC is a catalogue of manuscripts and archival materials located at libraries, archives and societies throughout the United States and its territories.
<a href="http://www.worldcat.org/">http://www.worldcat.org/</a>	WorldCat is a catalogue of 72,000 libraries in 170 countries giving access to the location of an almost unlimited amount of material. If a book or item is in several libraries World Cat can provide a list of the libraries located closest to the researcher.
<a href="https://www.fold3.com/">https://www.fold3.com/</a>	Fold3 is a fee-based service providing on line access to the military records of American service men and women.
<a href="http://www.virginiamemory.com/transcribe/collections/show/8">http://www.virginiamemory.com/transcribe/collections/show/8</a>	The James I. Robertson, Jr. Legacy Collection at the Library of Virginia is a collection of 33,000 pages of primary source materials on the Civil War.
<a href="https://secure.hosting.vt.edu/www.sources.civilwar.vt.edu/#/">https://secure.hosting.vt.edu/www.sources.civilwar.vt.edu/#/</a>	Civil War Sources is a project of the Virginia Center for Civil War Studies which offers easy access to over one

	hundred databases of digitized primary sources in Civil War era history available online.
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## Other Sources

### Scholars

Name	Email
Al McLean	<a href="mailto:amclean1@cox.net">amclean1@cox.net</a>

### Topic Précis

Primary sources are vital for two reasons. First, they allow the author to write history not just retell what others have written before. Primary sources allow the historian to come as close as possible to the actual event. To make an effective contribution to the study of a historical event, historians must base their judgment on what actually happened. Second, researchers need to know how to locate primary sources since often that is all that is available to them. If you want to find out about your great, great grandfather who was a sergeant in such and such regiment, a one volume Civil War history won't help you. To find your relative you will be going to primary sources such as military service records of individual soldiers. In recent years, the use of primary sources has been transformed by the internet and the creation of searchable databases. A word of caution is necessary. The historian must be aware of the problem inherent with primary sources. They often reflect the bias of the writer. Many writers will exaggerate their accomplishments and gloss over their humiliations. The best places for locating primary resources include the following. Despite all the recent innovations in historical research, the best source of primary Civil War materials remains a collection compiled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century—the *Official Records* which is a monumental collection of orders, reports, accounts, correspondence and maps from the records of the Union and Confederate armies and navies. Civil War newspapers are a second major primary source. In 1860, America was served by 3,725 newspapers of which 387 were dailies. For almost sixty years the Library of Congress has provided scholars an excellent method for locating primary sources through the National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections (commonly known as NUCMC) which is a catalogue of manuscripts and archival materials located at libraries, archives and societies throughout the United States and its territories. The Online Computer Library Center, Inc. (OCLC WorldCat) is a nonprofit research organization which produces and maintains the world's largest online public access catalogue. WorldCat began in 1967 to create a cooperative catalogue system for Ohio college libraries. It has expanded to 72,000 libraries in 170 countries giving access to the location of an almost unlimited amount of material. Military and civilian records, usually dealing with individuals, can be excellent primary sources for historians and invaluable sources for genealogists. These include the Compiled Military Service Records (CMSR) available in

the National Archives and through on-line services like Fold3. Another source is Civil War soldiers' pension records, with Union pension records kept at the National Archives and Confederate pension records kept in various state archives. Deeper research involves considering regimental histories, soldier's and leader's biographies, bibliographies of histories that provide lists of diaries, letters and other primary sources, and state historical societies archives. And one final word simply searching the internet for names places battles or units can produce results that can be amazing.

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